



Bethel Church Wauchope

Child Safe Policy

Contents

1. Policy Statement
2. Definitions
 - a. Physical abuse
 - b. Emotional maltreatment
 - c. Neglect
 - d. Sexual abuse
 - e. The witnessing of family violence
3. Policy Review
4. Obligations
 - a. Responsibility
 - b. Legal
 - c. Ethical
 - d. Biblical
5. Prevention
 - a. Working with children's check
 - b. Familiarity with child safe policies and procedures
 - c. Awareness
 - d. Recruitment and selection
 - i. Leadership
 - ii. Helpers
 - e. Use of a child's photos and information
6. Responding
 - a. Distance from the alleged perpetrator
 - b. Confidentiality
 - c. Counselling
 - d. Investigation of complaints
 - e.
7. Reporting
 - a. Mandatory Reporting
 - b. Incident Reporting

September 2022



8. A Safe Environment
 - a. Accountability
 - b. Safe surroundings
 - c. Child participation
9. Sources

1. Policy Statement

Bethel Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all its employees, congregation, helpers, parents and particularly, its children. The policies and procedures that are outlined in this document reflect Bethel Church's aim to provide a safe place where the risk of child abuse is minimised and on the possible and unfortunate occasion where it may occur, Bethel Church's response is both appropriate and caring in nature.

2. Definitions

a. Abuse:

A child is defined as someone under the age of 15 years.

A Young person is 16-18 years

Child abuse can come in many forms that can include but are not limited to the proceeding definitions. The five main categories are:

- i. Physical Abuse;
 - ii. Emotional Maltreatment;
 - iii. Neglect;
 - iv. Sexual Abuse; and
 - v. The Witnessing of Family Violence
-
- i. *Physical Abuse:* Physical abuse refers to the non-accidental use of physical force against a child that results in harm to the child. Behaviours that may be considered abusive include shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, kicking, biting, burning, strangling, pulling out hair and poisoning. Alcohol and drug administration to a child is also considered physical abuse.
 - ii. *Emotional Maltreatment:* This refers to the parents or caregivers inappropriate verbal or symbolic acts towards a child and/or a pattern of failure over time to provide a child with adequate non-physical nurture and emotional availability. Emotional maltreatment can include but is not limited to rejecting, isolating, terrorizing, ignoring and corrupting a child.



- iii. Neglect:* This refers to the failure by a parent or care giver to provide for the child's basic needs. This can include but is not limited to physical neglect, emotional or psychological neglect, educational neglect and environmental neglect.
- iv. Sexual Abuse:* Sexual abuse occurs when an adult or older/bigger child uses a child or young person for their own sexual gratification. It also includes any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in sexual processes beyond his or her understanding. This can include but is not limited to the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism and exposing or involving a child in pornography.
- v. Witnessing of family violence:* This occurs when a child is present while a parent or sibling is subjected to physical abuse, sexual abuse or psychological maltreatment.

b. Organisational Definitions:

- i. Organisation:* Bethel Church, Port Macquarie
- ii. Leadership:* Person who has a level of responsibility and oversight of Bethel Church.
- iii. Helper:* Any unpaid person who assists in the running of Bethel Church.
- iv. Church Member:* Any person who is attending Bethel Church on a regular basis.
- v. Visitor:* Any person who comes to Bethel Church but is not attending on a permanent basis.

3. Policy Review

The policies and procedures contained within this document will be reviewed regularly by the leadership of Bethel. Any changes will be incorporated into this document and all appropriate people (including but not limited to helpers) will be notified of any changes.

4. Obligations for Bethel Church

- a. Responsibility:* An important and fundamental principle of any responsible organisation is that all people, especially those who are vulnerable and less powerful such as children, be treated with fairness, dignity and protection. Bethel ardently adheres to this principle.



- b. *Legal:* Bethel Church is bound by Federal and state laws regarding child protection and endeavours to meet all requirements.

- c. *Ethical:* There are some behaviours, while not coming strictly under the definition of 'abuse', which are considered unethical and are not accepted by Bethel. These include but are not limited to:
 - i. Inappropriate conversation of a sexual nature;
 - ii. Coarse language – especially that of a sexual nature;
 - iii. Suggestive gestures or remarks;
 - iv. Jokes of a sexual nature;
 - v. Inappropriate touching;
 - vi. Inappropriate literature;
 - vii. Recording or filming without prior consent; and
 - viii. Being alone in a solitary or dark place with a child.

- d. *Biblical:* Bethel Church places great value on adhering to Biblical principles and as such, expects her leaders, helpers and members to likewise comply with these principles while in the service of Bethel Church. Bethel Church also strongly encourages these people to adhere to Biblical principles in their own personal lives.

5. Prevention

a. *Working With Children Check*

It is a requirement that helpers who are engaged in the provision of services for children in Bethel Church, as well as all leaders complete the 'Working With Children Check'. Before the commencement of services at Bethel Church, an APP number needs to be given to the Church Administrator as well as your date of birth. Please note, clearance does not have to be obtained before the commencement of work, the application process however, does need to be commenced before work can be started.

Once clearance has been obtained, the Church Administrator needs to be notified of your WWC number and your date of birth if not already provided as soon as possible, so that verification can be obtained.

b. *Familiarity with Child Safe Policies and Procedures*

It is a requirement that all helpers who are engaged in the provision of services for children and all leaders be aware and familiar with Bethel Church's child safe policies and code of conduct. Once a year, all child related helpers need to review this document and sign and return to the administrator the attached form.



c. Awareness

All leaders and helpers in child related services to Bethel Church are encouraged to be vigilant and aware of the environment surrounding them, especially in relation to children within their close proximity.

d. Recruitment and Selection

- i. Leadership: Leaders must be carefully selected and screened prior to being employed at Bethel Church. Leaders that are being employed by Bethel Church need to meet the following criteria:

1. Committed to upholding the values and principles of Bethel Church.
2. Pass a working with children check and provide a WWC number to G Bethel Church.
3. Appropriate reference checks are passed.
4. All leaders must be will to comply with the code of conduct and policies for Bethel Church and sign a form to state their agreement to them.
5. All employed leaders will undergo a three month probation period, at the end of which their long term employment will be discussed.

- ii. Helpers: Helpers will likewise be carefully selected from amongst the congregation. Helpers who engage in child related services within the Hastings region must meet the following criteria:

1. Committed to upholding the values and principals of Bethel Church.
2. Pass a working with children check and provide a WWC number to Bethel Church.
3. Are willing to sign that they have read, understood and agree to abide by the code of conduct and the child safe policies of Bethel Church.

e. Use of Child Photos and Information

Information that is collected about a child while in the service of Bethel Church is to be kept strictly confidential and only divulged to other members of the Bethel Church team. Likewise, any images, photos or likeness of a child is not to be made available outside of Bethel Church for any purpose including but not limited to social media and advertising without the express, written consent of the child's parent or guardian. To obtain the appropriate document to get permission, please contact the Administrator of Bethel Church.



6. Response

In the event that an incident of abuse is reported or discovered, Bethel Church will ensure that appropriate action is taken.

a. *Distance from the alleged perpetrator*

Until a full investigation can be completed, it may be in the best interest of the child/young person to have the leaders or helpers stood down. The leadership in

collaboration with appropriate people will make this decision. Please note that an alleged perpetrator is entitled to a just process, and innocence or guilt will not be presumed during the investigation.

The allegations should not be discussed or communicated with other people until a full investigation has been completed and a decision reached by the leadership of Bethel Church. Gossip and defamatory remarks regarding the alleged perpetrator will not be tolerated.

b. *Confidentiality*

Bethel Church recognises that it is important to maintain confidentiality throughout the process of a report being made and an investigation being completed. Thus, it is expected that every aspect of a child abuse report will be kept confidential by everyone involved in the complaints process.

Confidentiality protects the child, the notifier, the respondent and the organisation and ensures a fair and proper process.

c. *Counselling*

Bethel Church will make professional counselling support available to all parties involved.

d. *Investigation of Complaints*

In response to all complaints, a fair and impartial internal investigation will be completed and the result documented. The investigation will consist of but is not limited to interviews with witnesses and the collection of information about the incident. All people involved in the investigation will be given an opportunity to present their view of the events in question.

In addition to an internal investigation, depending on the incident, outside authority may need to be contacted. If this is the case, the appropriate people will be made aware of the decision to move the investigation into the hands of law enforcement authorities and all information pertinent to the case will be handed over.



7. Reporting

a. *Mandatory Reporting*

According to the NSW Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, “a person who, in the course of his or her professional work or other paid employment delivers health care, welfare, education, children’s services, residential services, or law enforcement, wholly or partly, to children...” is a mandatory reporter (Part 2, 27, 1 (a)).

For Bethel Church, this means that all employees and helpers who engage in children’s ministries and services are mandatory reporters. Being a mandatory reporter means that if you have “...reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, and those grounds arise during the course of or from the person’s work, it is the duty of the person to report, as soon as practicable, to the Director-General the name, or a description, of the child and the grounds for suspecting that the child is at risk (Part 2, 27, 2 (a & b)).

If leaders or helpers suspect reasonable grounds, or a child discloses possible abuse, leaders and helpers should access the Mandatory Reporter Guide to determine if the situation meets the Risk of Significant Harm definition.

<http://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

At the end of the process, a final decision report will guide reporters as to what action to take.

A copy of the Report should be attached, together with an incident report to a secure file.

It is an expectation of Bethel Church that if the need to make a mandatory report arises, that if practical, the leadership of Bethel Church will be notified prior to making the report.

To make a mandatory report, the ‘Child Protection Hotline’ needs to be called. Their phone number is **132 111**. This service is available 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

b. *Incident Reporting*

In the unfortunate event that there is an incident, a member of leadership needs to be immediately notified. The leadership of Bethel Church is David and Elizabeth Morgan. An incident form should be filled out as soon as possible (within 24 hours of the disclosure).

An incident form needs to be filled out. An incident form is attached to this policy, or they can also be found at the information desk or by contacting the Administrator of Bethel Church.



If there are reasonable grounds to suspect a Child has been abused or is suffering abuse, the Police and the Organisation's Insurer will be immediately contacted.

- Port Macquarie Police: 6583 1099
- Insurer for Bethel Church

Reasonable grounds can be assumed when:

- A child discloses that he or she has been abused; and/or
- Someone close to a child (eg sibling, relative, close friend etc) discloses on behalf of that child.
- Indicators of possible abuse are observed

Please note, Bethel Church will not tolerate any form of coercion, reprisal, intimidation or retaliation against any employee or helper who makes a report of abuse within Bethel Church. Bethel Church also expects that its employees and helpers will provide any information necessary for an investigation.

8. A Safe Environment

Bethel Church provides the following guidelines in an effort to foster a safe environment for everyone.

a. Accountability

Incidents of abuse are unlikely to be perpetrated in front of a witness. The presence of a witness can also clarify and possibly exonerate all questionable allegations. Thus, Bethel Church provides the following principals for leaders and helpers to follow:

- i. Helpers and leaders should endeavour wherever possible, never to be alone with a child. This applies particularly to dark and solitary places.
- ii. Helpers and leaders should not be involved in toileting procedures for children. If a toddler or child requires assistance with the toilet, the parent of that child should be contacted and asked to take them to the toilet. This same procedure should be followed for the changing of a baby's nappy. In the event that a child or baby's parent cannot be contacted, the child should be accompanied by two leaders.
- iii. Do no kiss, cuddle or touch a child in any way that can potentially be thought of as sexual. Consoling an upset child or toddler in an appropriate fashion does not fall within this description.
- iv. Do not discipline a child through the use of physical means. If a child is not responding to correction, the parents of the child should be immediately contacted.
- v. Coarse or inappropriate language including but not limited to swearing is never appropriate while caring for children in Bethel Church. This also includes suggestive jokes or remarks or any conversation with sexual content.

September 2022



- vi. Do not criticise parents, parenting styles or any other people within a child's hearing.

b. *Safe Surroundings*

All leaders and helpers are encouraged to look out for potential threats and hazards within their immediate environment. This includes but is not limited to:

- i. 'Unattached Strangers' – All visitors should make themselves known to the children's program leaders and request permission to be present and/or part of the program. All helpers are encouraged to be on the lookout for anyone who they do not know and doesn't belong in the children's program.
- ii. All leaders and helpers of Wauchope Church are encouraged to be situationally aware of the environment around them. There are many hazards that can potentially harm children which need to be corrected. This can include but is not limited to uncovered power points, appliances within a child's reach (ie. A kettle on the edge of the bench) and unstable furniture to name just a few examples.

If a hazard is noted and cannot be immediately, quickly and effectively rectified by the individual who noted it, a hazard form needs to be filled out and handed to a leader of Bethel Church. Hazard forms are available from the information desk and can also be obtained by contacting the Church Administrator.

- iii. The consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs on the grounds of Bethel Church is strictly prohibited. Any child that requires prescription medications to be given out by a Bethel Church helper or leader will need to have a signed letter from their parents/guardians stating what medication is to be given, how much and how often the medication needs to be given. This letter will be kept on file on the Bethel Church premises.
- iv. Reporting allegations of 'Reportable Conduct'.
"Reportable Conduct" is any inappropriate behaviour of a sexual nature, assault, ill-treatment or neglect, or any behaviour which causes psychological harm to a child.
Reports of 'Reportable Conduct' must:
 - Be investigated internally
 - Include the Ombudsman in the investigation
 - Notify the Ombudsman of the outcome of the investigation
 - Notify the Office of the Children's Guardian if the allegation is substantiated.



c. *Child Participation*

All children should be made to feel safe and welcome in the programs that are provided for them by Bethel Church. Leaders and helpers are encouraged to help children feel that their opinion and their thoughts are welcomed and will be heard. Opening various avenues for children to be able to express their thoughts and opinions will create a platform where, if there are situations of a delicate nature such as abuse, the child will feel that they have some way of communicating this to the appropriate people.

9. Sources

- a. Australian Institute of Family Studies – Child Family Community Australia
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/factsheets/a142091/> “What is child abuse and neglect?”
- b. Children and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998 No 157.
[http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/fullyhtml/inforce/act+157+1998+FIRST+0+N#ch.3-pt.2-sec.27.](http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/fullyhtml/inforce/act+157+1998+FIRST+0+N#ch.3-pt.2-sec.27)
- c. The Ombudsman 1974 and Amendments
<http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/>
- d. Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

Agreement with the Bethel Church Child Safe Policy

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Bethel Church Child Safe Policy.

I have read and fully understood the Bethel Church Child Safe Policy and agree to abide by it and uphold them as I work/help with children in the Bethel Church environment.

I am aware that if I do not abide by the Bethel Church Child Safe Policy and the Bethel Church Code of Conduct, at the discretion of church leadership, I may be asked to step down from providing child related services within Bethel Church.

Furthermore, I agree to obtain a ‘Working With Children Check’ and provide all relevant details to the Administrator of Bethel Church in a timely manner.

FULL NAME: _____ DATE: ____/____/____

SIGNATURE: _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____
September 2022